

Central MRS Meeting Notes
October 17, 2007
Alamance County Agricultural Extension

Counties Present: Alamance, Davie, Durham, Gaston, Guilford, Lee, Mecklenburg, Person, Randolph, Rockingham, Rowan, Stokes, Yadkin

Introductions
News from Raleigh
Older Youth
Chapter 5 Jurisdictions
Changing tracks for RIL
Other

News from Raleigh

- MRS is really almost in DataWarehouse – the DCD letter should come out next week or so, it is on the Section Chief's desk right now. The DCD letter explains how to access DW and how to use the State Sanctioned queries even if you do not understand how to build queries yourself.
- Heather will be doing trainings on MRS 5106, the paper form, the database, and DataWarehouse in early November, so let her know if you would like her to come to your county.
- We are also working on a 5106 Users Manual and will take it to Children's Services in November.
- Rick talked about AOC contract that provides training for county workers to be able to check criminal records. We have also found that if you have access to this you can also check the civil records so that workers could check to see if there was a protective order for DV.
- Review the DCD letters that came out since last meeting: names on RIL, Results of Review, Central Registry, Users Manual update, Longscan project, Foster Home Recruitment and Retention project.
- System of Care Conference in Winston Salem Dec 3 & 4.
- Krista Kinley from Forsyth emailed Holly a grant opportunity from the Brookdale Foundation "Relatives as Parents program". For creating or expanding services to grandparents or other relatives acting as parents to children.
- After the Federal CFSR the Administration for Child and Families had asked to post MRS on their web site as best practice. We are able to be there because of open minds, willing spirits and lots of commitment and work on the part of all of you and your colleagues. Take a look for yourself, and give yourselves a big round of applause! <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/cwmonitoring/promise/index.htm>
- Holly and Patrick have completed an application to JKF School of Government for MRS to receive an Innovations in American Government Award – an award process that recognizes innovations in how government works.

Older Youth – Joan McAllister, the LINKS coordinator, was here to discuss. This was a concern in our CFSR that we are not serving older youth like we should be.

- The LINKS program serves young people that are or were in foster care as a teenager. They are eligible up until age 21 if they were ever in foster care as a teenager.
- Purpose of the program is to help young people to develop the capacity to achieve positive outcomes.
- It is different to help people to learn to achieve for themselves than to do it for them.
- Seven outcomes that we are trying to help them achieve:
 - Safe and Stable Housing- most children (60%) go back to their own families but if not, at least stay in the same community. Up to \$1,000 to help them make the transition to their own place to live. Some money to help with incidentals (furniture etc.)
 - Sufficient Income – enough money to meet their basic needs. Sometimes do some crisis assistance.
 - Education/Vocational training – we have had education training voucher for kids that were in care on or after their 17 birthday, and the legislature has passed a bill allowing children who age out of care or were adopted after age 12 a free ride at any UNC college (passed July of 2007).
 - Avoiding High Risk Behavior – if you don't feel good about yourself or have supports it is harder to do.
 - Postpone Parenthood – obviously want to encourage them to postpone becoming a parent.
 - Access to Health Care – kids that age out of foster care are automatically eligible to Medicaid until they are 21 regardless of income or other factors.
 - Personal Support Network > 5 – these kids need a support network that does not include the social worker and LINKS coordinator. People that they can call when they are having troubles and to avoid high risk behaviors. This, to Joan, is the most important one. If you have this one, you can use these folks to help with all the other six outcomes.
- The kids that come into LINKS sometimes don't have families so when we talk about serving families, we kind of overlook these kids. Joan made handouts comparing MRS and Positive Youth Development. (For a copy of this handout, please contact Joan.)
- Handout also includes a permanency pact.
- We have some agency policies that do not encourage kids to develop support systems. Need to look more closely at those and make sure that we are not following the policy but in doing that cutting them off from developing a support system.
- Ask the youth who is important to them. We do a lot of things, to try to find supports but sometimes do not ask the child who they think is important.
- CFT meetings – get the youth to bring their family. Their family may be their biological family, their best friends dad, even some person that you think is kinda weird that you would rather not have there, but its who the child wants there.

- Data Mining to find relatives that may have lost contact but would be willing to reconnect with. (Aunt they liked as a child who moved to California when they were young and they don't know how to reconnect with.)
- NC Housing Search – website that allows you to search for affordable housing in cities in NC by range of rent you are able to pay. NCHousingSearch.org
- SOAR training – training primarily looking at homeless population that will help us help people get SSI and SSBI. The success rate of people that have gone through this training is about 70%. Joan will pass information about this along to Holly and she can get it out via the MRS listserve.
- One of the challenges of MRS still is getting foster care saturated with MRS principles.

Questions/Comments

- If 60% of kids that age out go back to the families that we removed them from, then to help these kids, we at DSS should continue to work with these families, because in doing so, we are helping these older youth.
- Very challenging to get the logistics and the finances worked out so that all children have somewhere to go and some “family” to see – especially around the holidays.
- Workers said the #1 thing is to listen to the children. Sometimes these are people that we would not choose for kids to hang out with, but they aren't actually causing harm, so used a mentor to supervise a visit between the child and this person.
- All kids want money – we make it hard for kids in care to get money – how will they get to a job, or to mow lawns or all the things that kids do to earn money. You can ask them instead of “I want money” - “How do you think you would like to earn this money?” Fund raisers at group homes, let them think of things. Nice to allow them the opportunity to earn money from their own ideas, and also teach them the concept of earning their own money.
- What about transportation when they have a job and then they can't get there? Well, how would you get to work tomorrow if your car broke down? Call someone – see who you might be able to call. Someone they work with, go to school with, some other adult that is not their foster parent. LINKS won't pay 44 cents a mile, but they might be able to give someone a small amount of money for gas.
- Some counties have contracts with taxi companies and get lower rates for transporting certain people to certain places.
- Can buy bus passes and bicycles.
- College sororities and fraternities always need service projects, and they may be willing to help out.
- One county has talked to some smaller businesses to have kids work there for some time and if the business owner likes the child and the child does a good job, they can hire them permanently. This gives the youth some work experience.
- Also encourage youth to volunteer. Sometimes the volunteer opportunities end up being a 2 for 1 deal and they get a mentor out of it.

Jurisdictions – formerly Cross County Issues

Terri was not able to be here, so Holly, Patrick and Rick discussed questions.

Planned move – what counts as a planned move?

- County A had a case that came in July and they had contact with a family the family moved at the end of September to County B (well over the 45 days). The assessment was still open (due to non-compliance of the mother). Question is who's case is it?
- Policy says that the original county will complete the assessment if they started it, unless it is a planned move. So their question is: was this a planned move? Since when these people moved, it was well after the 45 days because it was still open because the original county was still collecting information because the mother was uncooperative.
- Patrick – if it is a planned move, the purpose was for the two counties to consult together and determine where the case was in the assessment process to determine what the best way to finish out the assessment. If county A knows that in 3 weeks that the family is moving to county B, county A&B should get together and determine what can happen before the move. The emphasis should be on going ahead and completing the assessment and making a case decision. If you initiated it, go ahead and finish it out if at all possible. Clearly County B will handle in-home services if necessary. If it is a border county, clearly County A should be able to complete the assessment. This was designed more for people moving a great distance, from Wake to Buncombe county.
- Holly's suggestion was to get together with your border counties and set up a protocol before you are in the middle of a case where emotions are running high and there are specifics.

Kinship Care

- If you are asking someone to complete a kinship care assessment – what is involved?
- Rick – comprehensive kinship care assessment, and initial kinship care assessment.
- There is an inter-county form 1797 that appears to have been revised to include kinship care, but Division staff said this is a foster care form, but it mentions kin because they could be living there at the time.
- It (form 1797) is only required in foster care placement across counties, but it may be useful to use in other situations because it is a contract discussion who is doing what. Cannot use it in lieu of the kinship assessment.
- What if Grandma has been raising the child since birth but does not have any legal custody. Mom comes to visit and something happens and a report is called in. Question is would you have to do a kinship care assessment?
- Yes, because once we have gotten involved if Grandma does not have legal custody you do have to do a kinship assessment. We have liability at this point. We have no way to know if Grandma is a safe placement. Doesn't seem like the most family centered thing to do if she has been raising the child for years, but we have to complete the form.
- But then what do you do, you can't close a case when a child is in a kinship care?

- Depends on if you have an issue with Mom coming and getting the child. If not, then there are no safety issues and DSS can step back.
- If Mom would be a safety issue then you have to achieve permanency.
- Some counties file petitions on behalf of relatives.
- Some have contracts with attorneys that will do them for relatives.

Counties are confused about when they should transfer cases

- At a past meeting counties said they were told that if they initiated a case, the case would be theirs until case decision – is this correct?
- Then what is initiation? Counties were told that if they accepted the report and have made face-to-face contact they have initiated, even if it turns out after they went out that the child was not a resident of your county, but of a neighboring county.
- Rick clarified that this is true, unless you know up front, that the child is not a resident. Then the county that initiates can do it as an assist, knowing that they won't continue. (Ex: Davie has no hospitals, so all emergency hospital situations have first contact by another county. If Forsyth gets a call re: a woman and child in the hospital and they know they are from Davie, Forsyth can still go out as an assist, knowing that they will be transferring to Davie. If they didn't know where the people were from, it would be Forsyth's case.)
- Holly believes that the intent of the policy is to have counties meet and have discussions about how best to handle these cases. Can't just call another county and forget it, have to actually work with each other.

Why is it this way?

- The rules of this should really be: Play Nice and do what is best for the family. However, it is obvious that this is not going to happen.
- The WorkGroup said that if counties are cooperating that is great – but what if they are not? Need some hard rules so that is why they went with the “if you initiate it – its yours” idea.
- Holly pointed out that this will help you sometimes and hurt you sometimes. However, it will seem like it is always working to your disadvantage at first. But it will go both ways.
- A whole subset of questions came up regarding petitions in these situations where a county where the child is not a resident came up. Not totally clear what the answers were.

Changing tracks for RIL – Mecklenburg county posed a question to those present With the expunction process, DV cases are often handled by the Family Assessment approach. However, in a FA situation there is no accountability for the batterer in our system and cannot place the batterer on the RIL. But don't want to be switching tracks just to put him on the RIL. However also don't want to do it as an Investigative and then put both parents on the RIL.

- Some counties wouldn't take it as family if the violence was that serious and would have taken it as investigative anyway.
- Others would switch to investigative if there was a weapon or serious threat.

- Keep in mind as always: *just because you are doing an investigative assessment does not mean that you can't use family centered practice or that you can't interview the non-offending parent first.*

Question: are some counties changing tracks so that you can put a perp on the RIL?

- Evaluate why are you putting the person on the RIL? Is it to benefit other children or to punish the perpetrator? It is not a tool to punish the perpetrator.

Can you hold them accountable without putting them on the RIL? People said yes. How?

- Mandate services.
- What if he is baby daddy or boyfriend? You can't force him to do anything if he is not living in the home.

November meetings:

Central: Cabarrus Co. November 27th

Western: AB Tech Buncombe November 30th

East: Hertford Co November 28th